

A map of Europe and its surrounding regions, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria, Lebanon, and Cyprus. Major cities like London, Berlin, Warsaw, Paris, Prague, Bucharest, Sofia, Athens, Ankara, and Moscow are marked. The map is color-coded in shades of green and blue.

# BOOK REVIEW: «ASSESSING EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY. PERSPECTIVES FROM THE LITERATURE»

BY M. MATRAKOVA & J. WOLFSCHWENGER

The book is a comprehensive literature review commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands edited and authored by an interdisciplinary team of researchers from the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS). The Dutch Ministry rightly identifies that “despite the rapidly growing body of literature, there was no systematic review available that catalogued the explanatory variables used by ENP scholars” (p. xi). Indeed, the enormous amount and fragmentation of literature, not least owed to the geographical distinction between eastern and southern neighbourhood, has made it difficult for researchers to identify overarching dynamics. As a method the researchers use an iterative research design. The initially defined conceptual framework is refined and adapted in a circular process according to the findings of the in-depth literature review. The bulk of the reviewed literature is English language A1 and A2 academic journals, books from quality publishers and publications from high-ranked think tanks.



**Editor:**  
Hrant Kostanyan

**Contributors:**  
Steven Blockmans,  
Artem Remizov,  
Linda Slapakova and  
Guillaume Van der Loo

**Publication:**  
Rowman & Littlefield.  
London. 2017

In chapters 3 to 7, the five major explanatory variables of the effective/ineffective application of conditionality and socialization are identified: the tensions between interests and values (i.e. promotion of democracy versus stability); joint ownership and local dynamics; perception and visibility; external factors, mainly the impact of other regional ‘hegemonic’ powers (i.e. Russia and the Gulf States) and finally coherence. The chapters outline the major academic debates around each of the factors and discuss the often conflicting assessment of their contribution to effectiveness.

The review seeks to answer three questions: how does the literature conceptualize effectiveness; to what extent does the literature consider the ENP to be effective and coherent and finally, what are the factors that explain effectiveness and coherence? In chapter 2 the authors find that the conceptualization of the EU’s policy instruments remains within the realm of traditional Europeanization mechanisms. The fact that this chapter focuses mainly on negative and positive conditionality shows how limited is the study of EU socialisation in its neighbourhood. Contrary to what might be expected, the misbalance in research does not indicate a greater effectiveness of conditionality, but rather a more limited use and understanding of socialisation-based policy instruments.

Thereby the review demonstrates the mutual dependence of, and the trade-offs between the explanatory factors, revealing the dilemmas involved in balancing the sometimes conflicting ENP objectives. For example, the ‘interest versus values’ dilemma (Chapter 3) remains a recurring issue throughout the book, strongly affecting other determinants such as local political dynamics and the external actors’ perception. Unsurprisingly, the review presents an overall negative picture of the ENP’s effectiveness.

It is creditable how the book bridges insights from the southern and the eastern neighbourhood despite their contextual differences. For example, it demonstrates the similarity of the roles of alternative

regional hegemony such as Russia, Iran or Saudi Arabia (the 'neighbours of neighbours'), allowing researchers and policy-makers to draw the lessons from developments in both contexts. With regards to such external factors, the authors note that the southern neighbourhood is highly understudied compared to the eastern neighbourhood. While this part of the review (Chapter 6) pays great attention to the security dimension and sectoral convergence, democratic transformation could have been considered more carefully in the context of the growing literature on 'autocracy-promotion' or 'democracy-obstruction' (e.g. recent works by Risse, Babayan, Libman, Obydenkova and Tolstrup).

The book does not aim to present surprising insights or a new hypothesis. However, as a systematization of the main factors that contribute to policy effectiveness it is a valuable contribution to ENP literature. The authors conclude most of the

chapters with a summary of the state of research, clearly identifying the issues that would benefit from further analysis. Thus, from a practitioners' perspective it is a helpful tool for policy-makers, evaluators and civil-society experts who would like to find an overview of determinants of ENP effectiveness and additional sources on specific issues. For the use in academia, the book would have benefited if the authors had concluded this comprehensive review with an attempt to synthesize interconnected dynamics across the various constraining factors into concrete contact points for a more sophisticated conceptualization of the ENP.

Photos: Online sources

**Marta Matrakova** (GEM-STONES) is writing her thesis on "Political Transitions in the EU-Russia Shared Neighbourhood", at Université libre de Bruxelles (BE) and LUISS Guido Carli di Roma (IT).

**Johann Wolfschwenger's** (GEM-STONES) research project focuses on "Rethinking EU External Governance Mechanisms in the EU-Russia Contested Neighbourhood". Johann will receive his PhD from Université de Genève (CH) and Université libre de Bruxelles (BE).

---

PUBLIC EVENT - 16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2017

**Book Presentation**

«Assessing European Neighborhood Policy. Perspectives from the Literature»

**Chair:**

Aude Merlin (ULB)

**Speakers:**

Hrant Kostanyan (CEPS), Artem Remizov (LUISS & ULB)  
& Johann Wolfschwenger (UNIGE & ULB)

**Time & Location:**

16:00 - 18:00 CET

Kant Room, Institute of European Studies-ULB

39-41 Avenue Franklin Roosevelt, 1050 Brussels, Belgium



European Joint Doctorate on  
Globalisation, Europe & Multilateralism -  
Sophistication of the Transnational Order,  
Networks, and European Strategies

More Information:

[www.gem-stones.eu](http://www.gem-stones.eu)

Subscribe to our Newsletter:

[pmo@gem-stones.eu](mailto:pmo@gem-stones.eu)

Follow us on Facebook:

**Gem-Stones PhD School**



*This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No [722826].*